Moritz Güdemann and Theodor Herzl

BY JOSEF FRAENKEL*

I. Introduction

The striking difference between the published Diaries of Theodor Herzl and the unpublished Memoirs of Moritz Güdemann, the late Chief Rabbi of Vienna (which, from Güdemann's family archives, were put at my disposal for a few weeks of study in Vienna some years before the outbreak of World War II), lies in the fact that Herzl's Diaries were written for posthumous publication while Güdemann's Memoirs were intended only for his family. The author of *Der Judenstaat ("The Jewish State")* describes his experiences, struggles, plans, journeys and political actions with youthful zest, in a lively, graphic style and witty phrases. He used to make daily entries in his diary under the fresh impact of his experiences. Güdemann, on the other hand, began to write his Memoirs in retrospect at the age of 64 (in 1899) and continued them with interruptions, chapter upon chapter, and it was not until 1913 — nine years after Herzl's death — that he committed to paper his memories of Herzl. From that time until August 1918, he made his notes in the form of a diary. His style was serene and unhurried, with the wisdom of a man who had accomplished the main purpose of his life.

Herzl was a visionary and legislator — Moritz Güdemann a religious Jew and pastor of souls. Herzl, the iconoclast, aimed at destroying false gods and at demolishing ghetto walls, at the same time creating a new edifice which would shelter the children of Israel. Güdemann was conservative and opposed to new ideologies. He guarded his sanctuary — the Temple — and considered it his supreme duty to preserve the unity of the Vienna Jewish Community.

When Herzl was developing his plans for *Der Judenstaat,* he had primarily three persons in mind who were to help him in the realisation of his dream — the philanthropists Baron Hirsch and Baron Rothschild, and Güdemann, the religious Jew. Should they join, Herzl was convinced that he would live to see the fulfilment. All three refused to collaborate.

Before describing the — sometimes conflicting — records of the two men on this encounter, a few biographical notes on Güdemann and some excerpts from his Memoirs may help to understand his personality.

*This contribution supplements the preceding essay with regard to one aspect of Güdemann's life. - Ed.

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II. Chief Rabbi Dr Moritz Güdemann

Moritz Güdemann, born on February 19, 1835, at Hildesheim near Hanover, came of a middle-class family, well liked by both Jew and Gentile and as a child he "had never experienced any friction between Jew and Gentile". When his father Josef, who owned a butcher's shop, died in 1847, the Catholic priest said: "And now let us say a Paternoster for our dear Güdemann".

Moritz Güdemann personally hardly ever experienced any antisemitism. He mixed with many non-Jews, and the difference in religion never rose unpleasantly to the surface. But he did, as a child, become acquainted with the malevolence of a converted Jew. The town's official receiver whose baptised father had once been a servant of Güdemann's grandfather, with the characteristic trait of many converts, showed the Jews, and especially Güdemann's father, the great power he could wield. He inflicted so much suffering upon Güdemann's family that it affected his father's health. He fell ill and died.

Moritz at first attended the Jewish elementary school where he learned German and Hebrew. At the age of eight he entered the episcopal school – the only Jew in his form. His teachers were Catholic priests, and two of them, Leonis, and Jacobi in particular, who subsequently became Bishop of Hildesheim, exerted a deep and lasting influence on the boy. He was never made to suffer any "insults or other unpleasantness" on account of his Jewish origin during his school years. He was an intelligent student, praised by his teachers. He left school in 1853. It so happened that at this time appeals were being circulated among the Jews of Hildesheim, on the initiative of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt-on-Main, protesting against the foundation of the Theological Seminary at Breslau, which was described as a great danger to Judaism, because Heinrich Graetz, the historian of the Jewish people, had been proposed there as teacher. This incident helped to induce Güdemann to go to Breslau to study zealously at the Seminary under the scholar Dr Zacharias Frankel, the historian and philologist Heinrich Graetz, the scholar Dr Jacob Bernays, to whom Theodor Mommsen submitted every page of his work for correction, and the mathematician Dr Benedikt Zuckermann. In addition, he attended lectures at the University on Arabic, Syrian and Persian literature.

The young student had to give private lessons to enable him to continue with his studies. Hunger, want and cold steeled his body and strengthened his spirit. The situation improved when he became a student-teacher in a school of religion. In 1858 he graduated and was soon called to Berlin to preach during the High Festivals. He also gave a sermon in Posen and was elected preacher in that town. He turned this offer down, however, as he wanted not only to preach but to work mainly as a rabbi.

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He therefore relinquished this post to his friend Josef Perles, the orientalist, whose work was recognised in scholarly circles. In 1862, he succeeded Dr Ludwig Philippson, the founder and editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* as rabbi in Magdeburg.

When the preacher Isaak Noah Mannheimer had died in Vienna (in April 1865), Güdemann declared himself prepared to give a trial sermon there. When he learned, however, that Josef Perles had also applied for this position, he withdrew his offer in view of his friendship with Perles. As the conservative representatives of the Vienna Community insisted on hearing him, he only consented to preach on being assured that the election of Perles was unlikely. In Vienna he made contact with the poet Ludwig August Frankl, then Secretary of the Jewish Community, as well as with the preacher Jellinek, with Ignaz Kuranda, Leopold Kompert, known for his ghetto stories, Baron Königswarter, and others. Güdemann's conservative outlook, which had been a disadvantage in Berlin, was a point in his favour in Vienna. On February 25, 1866, the Board of the Vienna Jewish Community *(Israelitische Kultusgemeinde)* elected him as their preacher. Soon afterwards the positions of preacher and rabbi were combined. Güdemann became the first "preacher and rabbi" in Vienna.

At the end of the sixties of the last century, Vienna had a Jewish population of about 40,000. The Jewish Community maintained well-organised religious institutions and enjoyed a reputation for "great nobility, prosperity and charity". Rich Jews practised philanthropy, and their highly cultured homes were open to both Jewish and non-Jewish poets, scholars, artists, diplomats and financiers. Many Jews craved titles and honours, and when they had attained a knighthood or a baronetcy they assumed "aristocratic habits". A considerable number became converts to Christianity. As baptised Jews they were sometimes anxious to conceal their origin and to deride Judaism.

The publication of Güdemann's pamphlet, *Nationaljudentum* ("Jewish Nationalism"), in 1897, stamped him as the spiritual leader of the assimilationists, in spite of the fact that he was not against unpolitical Jewish colonisation in Palestine and even gave his support to the collection of the funds for planting trees there. When Dr Alfred Stern, the President of the Jewish Community, prepared himself for an audience with the Prime Minister Dr von Seidler, he studied Güdemann's "Jewish Nationalism" in order to give his address the desired non-Zionist tone.

Güdemann bluntly posed the question: Who is more alienated — the nationally-minded Jew who ignores the Sabbath, or the observant Jew who feels himself to be a German? Güdemann regarded antisemitism as a temporary disease and was convinced that the nations of the world were on their way to recovery. His basic ideology rested upon this belief. Instead of being drawn into politics, he devoted himself to charity and helped many in need. He founded the "Jewish Public Soup Kitchen" and

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raised some 60,000 kronen for a colonisation effort in Palestine. A characteristic reflection of his attitude can be found in the following letter by Güdemann, which discloses his outlook and was later to have a sequel for him.

In 1907, the authoress Kamilla Theimer sent him a brochure on antisemitism, asking for his opinion. On December 19, 1907, he wrote to her:

> Dear Madam,
>
> Please accept my sincerest thanks for kindly sending me your valuable brochure. To discuss it with you I would first have to ask you how old you are, if it were not in bad taste to ask a lady her age. But I am 73 years of age, so I was already grown up before the term 'antisemitism' came into existence.
> Had I, 60 years ago in my native town of Hildesheim in Prussia, or 50 years ago when a student in Breslau, replied: 'I am a Jew' on being asked my nationality, I would have been taken for deaf or mad, and would have been told: 'You are German by nationality, and a Jew only by religion'. What has happened that this should be different now? Has it only just been discovered that I have Semitic blood in my veins? Perhaps my ancestors were at one time German Gentiles, converted to Judaism? Gregorovius writes in his history of Rome that the Habsburg Monarchy was once proud of being related to the Pierleoni family (of which Pope Anacletus II was a descendant), although the Pierleonis were Jews. Why should I not be a descendant of German Gentiles? I cannot swear to it, and my face, too, gives no definite clue. You claim, dear Madam, that with most Jews, their Jewishness is recognisable. I am incapable of recognising it - so why should I concede this faculty to others? As far as you yourself are concerned, you consider yourself to be pure Aryan - could you testify upon oath that none of your ancestors back in the 16th or the 10th century were baptised Jews? I therefore call myself a German with the same right that I did so 60 or 50 years ago, without objection from any quarter. And why not? Chamisso, a writer of German classics, was of French origin; the German generals François and Podbielski took part in the 1870 war but their names are no more German than Kohn, or the names of the deputies Chiavi and Stransky[1] who, in spite of their non-German names, claim to be the most German of all, and deny this right to Jews altogether. Was the President of the Frankfurt Parliament, Simson, was Johann Jacobi, the delegate of this Parliament, who was to offer the German Imperial Crown to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, a German? But according to their religion, they and others were Jews. You will see, therefore, dear Madam, that the present clean, or rather unclean, distinction between German and Jew, as proposed by the antisemites, is as unjustified as it is ridiculous.
> Ernst Schneider[2] even differentiates between human beings and Jews, though a differentiation between human beings and antisemites would be more appropriate. You are quite right, however, in calling antisemitism a vile thing. It has already been stated in the First Book of Moses, Genesis VI (5-6), though in more refined phraseology, that the wickedness of man is hidden in every one of us. Bismarck was the first to bring forth such wickedness, for he was himself.... the rest I leave to your imagination. Stöcker[3] acted as midwife and antisemitism as wet-nurse. It is so convenient for the villain to ease, as he believes, his quilty conscience by shouting "dirty Jew". This purpose has also been served by the theory of "Aryanism" which, originally a linguistic term, was later used as a means of oppressing still further the already oppressed Jews.
> I have already given my opinion on Aryanism - it can perhaps be traced back to a grandfather or great-grandmother, but suddenly, as in the case of Schönerer-Shmul, Leb Kohn appears. Then there is the peculiarity of Christianity.

[1]German antisemitic nationalists in the Austrian Parliament.
[2]One of the leading Christian-Social antisemites in the Parliament.
[3]The Prussian *Hofprediger* who started an antisemitic movement in Berlin.

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Judaism bids me love and respect everyone but Christianity finds itself in the unsatisfactory role of a hermaphrodite in that it suffers an inner contradiction. The Christian kneels before the image of a Jew, wrings his hands before the image of a Jewess; his Apostles, Festivals and Psalms are Jewish. Only a few are able to come to terms with this contradiction - most free themselves by antisemitism. Obliged to revere a Jew as God, they wreak vengeance upon the rest of the Jews by treating them as devils. Who would have been more fitted to fight antisemitism than the Popes, occupying as they do, the chair of St. Peter, a Jew?

What Pope Pius X said to you was very nice, but he did not proclaim it "urbi et orbi". The Church stimulates the flame of antisemitism for its own purposes since it can no longer have people burnt at the stake. You say, dear Madam, that the Aryan peoples have emancipated the Jews. This is not the case. The Aryan peoples have emancipated themselves from the darkness of the Middle Ages. This is one of the quiet and gradual influences which the Jewish Bible has exerted upon mankind. This Bible has destroyed the false gods of Egypt, Babylon, Rome and Greece, also stopped the burning at the stake and ended slavery. Consequently, the emancipation of the Jews is merely the auto-emancipation of the Aryan peoples. It dates back only 60 years and relapses are understandable. In 10 or 20 years' time, the Aryan peoples will be ashamed of such relapses and thus also of antisemitism. There can be no doubt that Jewry suffers because of it. They have suffered more and longer, but have survived some 3,000 years. "It is not the worst fruit which attracts the wasps".

You write, dear Madam, of these insolent, servile, ostentatious or otherwise conspicuous Jews. No doubt they exist. But their dislikeable characteristics are not derived from Judaism which indeed commends the adoption of only the best and noblest qualities. But antisemitism would probably increase in strength if the Jews were all angels or gods: the fact that there was *one* amongst them cannot be forgiven the Jews.

Zionism is an internal affair within Judaism and is therefore unknown to you. In the brochure which I take the liberty of sending you, I have given a more detailed analysis of it. Judaism is a religion, and in this lies its significance for the world. And were all the Jews of the world united in a free community in Palestine this would mean no more to Judaism as a religion than would the gathering of all friends of truth and enlightenment on a desert island. Would such isolation satisfy their innate urge and call to influence humanity? For centuries the Christians have accused the Jews of isolating themselves. And suddenly such isolation is to be a panacea? The poison is now to serve as an antidote? That is no sensible cure.

The reading of your valuable paper prompted me to put into writing some of my thoughts.

With renewed thanks and the expressions of my profound respect,

I remain,

Yours truly,

Dr. Güdemann
Chief Rabbi

The sequel to this letter came some years later when Dr Güdemann was informed by Dr Alfred Stern, President of the Jewish Community, that the letter was to be read to the House of Representatives, and would lead to a great "scandal". At a closed meeting of the Community, Güdemann was bitterly reproached by Dr Stern and by the representatives Mahler, Ofner and Kuranda. How could a Chief Rabbi write such a letter? But in fact the letter was never read in Parliament.

Güdemann assumed in his Memoirs that the whole affair had been

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instigated by some Zionists who had "used the President to browbeat him". The Chief Rabbi was deeply grieved that on this occasion his political friends had deserted him.

After the death, in February 1914, of his beloved daughter Franzi, he gradually began to withdraw from public life. In March of the same year, Dr Güdemann, now almost eighty years of age, tendered his resignation. The Board of the Jewish Community unanimously decided not to accept it. But they relieved him of all his duties, asking him to continue his work only as far as he found this possible. This gesture indicated the great respect in which the Chief Rabbi was held by the Jews of Vienna.

Very quietly he celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a rabbi in 1916. He now appeared in public only on special occasions. Without his active participation the Services in the City Temple tended to lose their appeal. Güdemann was officially asked for his opinion regarding the appointment of a rabbi for the City Temple – not a "chief" rabbi, as Güdemann was to continue to bear this title. His reply was characteristic. He declared that he did not wish to put any of his colleagues at a disadvantage and therefore preferred to leave the choice to the Board of the Jewish Community.

In April 1918, at a meeting of key men attended among others by Baron Louis de Rothschild, Dr Philipp von Gomperz and Dr Julius Ofner, Dr Zvi Perez Chajes gave an address which was "rich in content, dignified, a curriculum vitae and a programme". Again asked for his opinion, Dr Güdemann warmly recommended the appointment of Chajes. At the following meeting of the Jewish Community Chajes was elected Acting Chief Rabbi to the City Temple. On August 3, 1918, he was introduced to his new office, and on August 5 of the same year Güdemann died, aged 83.

III. Güdemann and Herzl

Güdemann's notes on his attitude towards Zionism and Herzl date from the year 1913 when he was seventy-eight. The Chief Rabbi admitted that some details had escaped his memory but he would endeavour, as far as the facts of the matter were concerned, to be as accurate as possible. He rarely kept letters, not even those from Herzl, so that he had to rely almost entirely upon memory.

Güdemann states that he received a letter from Herzl who was in Paris in the autumn or early winter of 1894. He is, however, mistaken in the year and in the belief that he had received it during the year of mourning following the death of his first wife (January 1894). Herzl noted in his Diary the date June 11, 1895, which shows that Güdemann did not receive this letter after the death of his first wife, but a few months after his second marriage (March 1895).

The two men had not yet met, but of course Herzl knew who Güdemann was, and Güdemann used to read Herzl's contributions in the *Neue*

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Freie Presse. Later a casual acquaintance was established; an entry in Herzl's diary reveals that they did meet occasionally but they exchanged only some trivial remarks or pleasantries. Before Herzl's wedding, his father Jakob Herzl. and his father-in-law Jakob Naschauer called upon Güdemann to ask him to marry the young couple. Güdemann agreed to do so, but had to leave Vienna just at that time, for family reasons.

In his Memoirs Güdemann reports that a few years later he was twice visited by a lawyer, who on behalf of Herzl asked him to invite Herzl's father-in-law to come and see him, in order to resolve a domestic dispute. The Chief Rabbi refused, saying that he would not summon Jakob Naschauer, who should come on his own initiative if he wanted the matter in question to be settled by him. He wrote in his Memoirs: "I believe my attitude helped Herzl since by inviting his father-in-law, I might easily have stirred the spark of dissension into a flame".

Theodor Herzl, who had prepared his plans and ideas for the publication of *Der Judenstaat* during the year 1895, wanted to have Güdemann's opinion on it. The first reference to Güdemann, entered in his Diary a few days before he wrote his first letter to him, read: "Güdemann! I shall make you first bishop of the capital".[4]

In his letter Herzl informed Güdemann that he had decided to conduct a campaign for the benefit of the Jews, and asked whether Güdemann would be prepared to help. Such help could, for the time being, take the form of a memorandum to be drafted by Güdemann dealing with the situation of the Jews in the world, the question of antisemitism, occupational distribution of the Jews, etc. Herzl also mentioned that he had requested Salo Cohn, "whose name is well known to you", to work out a memorandum concerning the material situation of the Jews. Herzl invited both Güdemann, the rabbi, and Cohn, the business man, to come to Caux on Lake Geneva on Tuesday, June 18. Should they both find at Caux that Herzl had troubled them "unnecessarily", he would hand them the sum of "Frs 1,000 for distribution as they saw fit, among the needy". After asking Güdemann to treat the letter as highly confidential, Herzl concluded: "You are a minister. A duty awaits you at Caux. I can tell you no more".[5]

The first letter made a "profound impression" upon Güdemann. The Chief Rabbi had rarely met a writer of international repute who had shown as strong a sense of Jewishness as Herzl. He was more accustomed to a type of Jewish journalist who adopted an indifferent or even negative attitude towards Judaism. Güdemann cabled Herzl: "Journey impossible. Salo at North Cape. Letter follows. Leaving for Baden Sunday afternoon. Güdemann". Though somewhat disappointed by this reply, Herzl trusted in his

[4]*Theodor Herzls Tagebücher* 1895-1904, Band I, Berlin, Jüdischer Verlag 1922, I, p. 43.
[5]*Ibid.*, I, p. 89.

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own "growing giant strength" and believed that the rabbis would collaborate with him and that with their help he would persuade the philanthropists to give their millions for the Jewish State. Those Jewish ministers who refused would be ignored, but Herzl was convinced that many of them would become "pillars of my organisation, and I shall honour them for it". They would be the first comrades-in-arms and, "as reward, they would become members of a fine and proud hierarchy which, naturally, would always be subjected to the authority of the State".[6]

Herzl originally placed great confidence in the religious leaders and particulary in Güdemann, whom he wished to make his "right-hand man".

Güdemann's letter soon arrived. In it, Güdemann expressed his surprise and satisfaction at Herzl's interest in Jewish affairs. He was prepared to come to Caux, but asked for fuller details of Herzl's plans. Güdemann, however, was not in favour of inviting Salo Cohn to Caux, though he was one of his best friends, a man who had made money and had had the sense to use it for philanthropic purposes. In his place, Dr Güdemann suggested Dr Heinrich Meyer-Cohn, one of the partners in the Berlin banking firm of Meyer-Cohn.

On June 16, 1895, Herzl wrote his second letter to Güdemann, indicating that "it was a matter of vital importance to the Jewish people". "I have found the solution [of the Jewish problem], but it no longer belongs to me. It belongs to the world".[7] Herzl asked Güdemann to get in touch with Albert Rothschild and to read to him Herzl's "Address to the Rothschilds", which he would be sending him shortly. (This "Address to the Rothschilds" was later published, with certain alterations, under the title, *Der Judenstaat.*) As Güdemann had agreed to come as far as Caux, Herzl assumed that he would not mind the short trip to Gaming-Waidhofen, Rothschild's estate. Herzl added in his letter to Güdemann: "He (Rothschild) will be just as moved and just as happy as you yourself, for I hear that he is a good and serious-minded Jew".[8]

In further letters Herzl outlined his plans in greater detail, though rather cautiously. On July 21 he wrote: "I am telling the Jews fairy-tales with a moral which they will come to understand gradually in five, ten or twenty years. I am sowing the seeds in the earth ... It is beautiful, ingenious and worthy of a poet.... Until now the plan was missing: the plan has been found".[9]

In his Memoirs the Chief Rabbi arrived at two conclusions: Firstly, that Herzl showed a "lack of judgment of human nature, which has also struck me afterwards and which no doubt influenced his subsequent career and fate". Secondly, that he, Güdemann, "never for a moment interpreted Herzl's intention to help the Jews as anything more than a kindly jour-

[6] *Ibid.*, I, p. 115.
[7] *Ibid.*, I, p. 122.
[8] *Ibid.*, I, p. 124.
[9] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 233-234.

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nalistic gesture in defence of the Jews of Vienna who were at that time suffering from rising antisemitism".

The first remark was partly correct. Herzl did experience many disappointments. He was particularly apt to misjudge persons who at first supported his plan and then withdrew. Güdemann's second remark, on the other hand, was probably intended to vindicate himself *ex post*. Anyone studying this correspondence will recognise that what Herzl had in mind was not action "on behalf of the Vienna Jews", but for the whole of the Jewish people.

After the exchange of a large number of letters and telegrams between Herzl and Güdemann, Munich was decided upon as a meeting-place, and on Saturday, August 17, 1895, Güdemann, Herzl and Meyer-Cohn met for the first time to discuss the "Jewish question".

Some contradictions are to be found between Herzl's entries in his Diary and Güdemann's Memoirs.

Herzl expounded his plans to Güdemann and Meyer-Cohn, reading from a manuscript. Güdemann recorded that Herzl "spoke for more than an hour" in the room of the Four Seasons Hotel. "When the discourse was over, we three went to the Jewish restaurant for lunch, without any further reference to the subject of the talk. In the afternoon each of us went his separate ways, and it was not until the following day, Sunday, that I again had the opportunity of speaking to Herzl. He accompanied me to the station and asked me what I thought of his idea. I suggested that he should incorporate his ideas in a novel, as had been done in the book *Freiland* which had appeared at that time.[10] This would show whether his idea could produce practical results. Herzl listened attentively, as though not altogether averse to my suggestion. I also asked what had led him to devote himself so warmly to the Jewish cause, to which he replied that his father had influenced him in this direction. He also told me that he had addressed a letter to one of the Rothschilds but had not even received a reply and this vexed him. To which I retorted: What do you expect? Failure to reply is an hereditary disease in that family. He laughed and said: That's a good one. Meanwhile we had arrived at the station and I caught the train for Baden, where I was staying for the summer".

Herzl, on the other hand, noted in his Diary that he read his draft aloud three times to the other two — first at lunch in the Jewish restaurant until four in the afternoon, then in his hotel room from 6 to 8.30 p.m., and finally in the restaurant after supper. Güdemann records:

> I sat there like someone dropped from the skies, hardly able to follow the talk, as I did not know what Herzl was aiming at and in what way the Paris Rothschilds were to assist the Vienna Jews in their difficulties, which I imagined to

[10]The reference is to the utopian social treatise *Freiland* by Theodor Hertzka.

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> be the main purpose of Herzl's plan. Gradually it dawned upon me that it had nothing to do with this but that what Herzl had in mind was the creation of a Jewish State. The outline of the work which Herzl subsequently published under this title was already contained in this letter. One member of the Rothschild family was to be elected as Prince since their banking firm would in any case lose its financial power. There was much talk of a Trust, a term the significance of which was still unknown to me at that time.

Herzl noted:

> Nevertheless, it made a deep impression. I could see it in Güdemann's shining eyes. On page 13 I had to stop as Meyer-Cohn had to leave. But Güdemann, the anti-Zionist, was already won over. He said: 'If you are right, then all the views I have held until now will collapse. For all that, I hope you are right, I have always believed that we are not a nation or rather more than just a nation: I believed we had the historic mission to propagate the idea of humanity among the nations and that we were therefore more than a territorial nation'.[11]

After the talk Güdemann felt, as he wrote in his Memoirs, lost unto himself: "I was silent and did not know what to say". Meyer-Cohn raised some objections but, continued Güdemann, "I lacked understanding and interest even for this, and was hardly able to collect my thoughts from those far-away regions in which they wandered. I had quite lost my awareness and my usual self-control".

On Herzl, who described the Munich meeting in his Diary the next day, Meyer-Cohn had made a poor impression. He did not consider him "the right man", and regarded him as a fault-finder, obstinately clinging to "narrow views". On the other hand, he liked Güdemann, who had evinced great interest and much understanding, and Herzl was convinced that Güdemann, unlike Meyer-Cohn, would prove a loyal adviser and collaborator.

Herzl, then 35 years of age, made up his mind to accept the counsel of the old Chief Rabbi who had drawn his attention to Hertzka's *Freiland*. After studying the book, Herzl wrote: "*Freiland* is a complicated machine with many cogs and wheels, but there is no proof that it can be set in motion. My plan, however, takes advantage of the utilisation of a natural force. What is this force? The plight of the Jews (Judennot)".[12] Herzl objected to his plan being called Utopian. A Utopia has no "vitality", whereas his plan was full of vitality.

Güdemann mentions in his Memoirs that he wrote to his wife after the discourse: "Herzl is a poet, but his plan, however interesting, is not feasible".

But why did the Chief Rabbi feel "like someone dropped from the skies?" The Chief Rabbi of Vienna, who had always lived his quiet and conservative life in peace, suddenly, for a fleeting moment, saw his whole ideology crumble before his very eyes. He was overwhelmed and "fascinated" by the idea of the Jewish State and exclaimed in Munich to Herzl: "To me, you seem like Moses".[13]

[11] *Ibid.*, I, p. 264.
[12] *Ibid.*, I, p. 271.
[13] *Ibid.*, I, p. 265.

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Herzl noted in his Diary on August 18, 1895, in Munich, that Güdemann, on parting at the railway station, had said to him with sincere enthusiasm: 'Remain as you are. Perhaps you have been chosen by God'. We kissed each other goodbye. His beautiful eyes shone with extraordinary radiance as he again stretched out his hand through the open window of his compartment and pressed mine firmly".[14]

Writing eighteen years later, Güdemann in his Memoirs mentioned the following episode: Many years after his meeting with Herzl in Munich, he met Rabbi Dr Werner from Munich, one of the "Protest Rabbis" who, in 1897, had protested in German newspapers against the convocation of the first Zionist Congress in Munich. Werner asked Güdemann whether it was true, that after Herzl's lecture he had embraced him, exclaiming, "You are our Messiah". "Never", wrote Güdemann, "was a greater untruth invented". The Messiah sentence, however, is not quoted in Herzl's Diary; Moses was not a Messiah.

After the Munich meeting, Güdemann and Herzl frequently exchanged letters, met, and discussed the Jewish cause. Herzl obtained from Güdemann the names of personalities to whom he could submit his plan and this he proceeded to do.

Once Herzl learned that Güdemann had called on the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Badeni, in connection with the growth of antisemitism. Güdemann, according to Herzl, "appealed for protection, wept, and was finally so overcome by emotion that he asked the Count's permission to bless him".[15] Herzl behaved quite differently when he saw Count Badeni at about the same time in connection with the Prime Minister's suggestion that he should edit a new daily paper sponsored by the government. Herzl pondered on the project and finally turned it down. Güdemann, to whom Herzl reported the matter, regretted that Herzl had rejected the offer and remarked: "Would it not have been of value to have access to the Prime Minister?" This remark annoyed Herzl, and he coined in his Diary the phrase which became proverbial: "You are a protected Jew (Schutzjude) — I am a Jew who protects. Obviously you cannot understand me".[16]

Later, Herzl left for Paris, where he negotiated with Zadok Kahn and Max Nordau and then proceeded to London. Here he met Zangwill and others and gave a Zionist address to the "Maccabeans". On his return to Vienna, he received a visit from the Chief Rabbi. Güdemann was shown into a drawing-room where he found a huge Christmas tree. "Imagine my dismay. Soon Herzl entered, together with Oppenheim, also an editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*. Our conversation — in the presence of the Christmas tree — was rather forced and I soon took my leave. As far as I can recall, we paid no further visits to each others' homes".

[14] *Ibid.*, I, p. 266.
[15] *Ibid.*, I, p. 296.
[16] *Ibid.*, I, p. 299.

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Herzl, too, mentioned this episode in his Diary.[17] After the publication of *Der Judenstaat* Herzl banned "Christian customs" from his house. In one of his most charming stories, "The Menorah", published in 1897,[18] Herzl describes how he freed himself from his non-Jewish habits and learned to kindle the candles of the Menorah instead.

Güdemann was mistaken in stating that no meetings took place after the Christmas tree episode. Herzl called on him several times at his home. Güdemann wanted to be "enlightened". During the arguments he invariably fell under the spell of Herzl's personality and became enthusiastic about his idea. "I am all yours" he said to him as late as January, 1896.

In the meantime, Herzl realised that he would not be able to deliver his "Address to the Rothschilds" in Vienna, Paris or London, and he decided to make his plan public. He found a publisher in Vienna, Max Breitenstein, in the Waehringerstrasse, and sent the first proofs to Güdemann with a covering letter. This indicates that Herzl considered Güdemann a supporter and that at that time they were still on friendly terms. The only one of Herzl's letters which Güdemann kept, reads as follows:

> Neue Freie Presse,
> Editor's Office,
> Vienna, Kolowratring, Fichtegasse 11.
>
> 26 January 1896.
>
> My dear Friend,
> Just two words, in haste.
> The first essay appeared last week in the Jewish Chronicle. Enclosed the first proofs of the 2 1/2 sheets of my brochure which will be ready by the end of the week. Please, let me have your comments and send them to my office tomorrow morning, together with the proofs. I shall, of course, let you have all the proofs before they go to print, but I would ask you to attend to this immediately, so that the printing should not be delayed.
> When I came to congratulate you on the birth of your child, you were not at home, but I trust you were told. I hope your wife and baby are both doing well.
> With kindest regards,
>
> Yours,
> Herzl.

Güdemann continues in his Memoirs: "This letter shows that we were then on friendly, jovial terms with one another. I also praised the proofs sent to me, as anyone would have done with a writer friend". But Herzl wrote in his Diary: "Güdemann has read the first proofs and writes to me full of enthusiasm. He thinks the pamphlet will explode like a bomb shell and will work wonders".[19]

When Herzl sent him further proofs, Güdemann replied on February 2: "I have read everything and find nothing to criticise".[20] On the same day they met in the Prater, and Güdemann said: "I just thought of you. You

[17] *Ibid.*, I, p. 328.
[18] *Die Welt*, Vienna, December 31, 1897.
[19] *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, I, p. 329.
[20] Cf. Theodor Herzl, in "Dr. Güdemann's Nationaljudentum", in Blochs *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift*, Wien, April 23, 1897.
[21] *Theodor Herzls Tagebücher*, I, p. 332.

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have no idea what a great work you have written". And Herzl added: "He was quite enthusiastic and expects an enormous success".[21]

After the publication of *Der Judenstaat,* Zionism became a much discussed subject in Jewish circles in Vienna. Meetings were held, and the debates became increasingly impassioned. The small group of Zionists was opposed by the overwhelming majority of Viennese Jews. The Chief Rabbi was primarily concerned with preserving peace in the community. He sympathised with Zionism, but leading figures in the Jewish Community urged him to change his attitude. Güdemann could not make up his mind. Herzl wanted him to speak openly in favour of Zionism; others wanted him to preach against Zionism. In the Temple, the Chief Rabbi kept silent about this issue. In his Memoirs Güdemann denied that he was subjected to any outside influence in this matter. The Board of the Jewish Community had not tried to persuade him to combat Zionism. Herzl, however, noted that Güdemann did not dare to speak up for Zionism. "He is afraid of the rich Jews who oppose it".[22]

August 17, 1895, was the date of the meeting in Munich: *Der Judenstaat* appeared on February 14, 1896, and Güdemann's inner conflict lasted until March, 1897.

Herzl now was in contact with Jews all over the world. He called on Güdemann again in January 1897 – not in 1896, as Güdemann assumed in his Memoirs. Herzl wrote:

> I went to see Güdemann the night before last. The same old talk. He pretended to be offended but when in the course of my discussion, I again aroused his enthusiasm he said: 'I am all yours'. 'Very well' said I, 'then preach about it in the Temple'. 'Excuse me', he cried, quite aghast: 'that would never do. I have made enquiries and the people don't want to have anything to do with it'.
> 'Are you the shepherd of your community?' I asked him. 'I permit you to be as careful as you wish. You can oppose Zionism, if you like, but don't ignore it. One may bring a matter to the attention of the people by half-hearted opposition, and in many other ways. That is the art of oratory'.
> But the unctuous one, whom I now know so well, just wrung his hands and moaned that it was impossible. So I said to him: Keep well! and left his house, probably for the last time.[23]

In March, 1897, Herzl and Güdemann met in the street and Güdemann accompanied Herzl to his house. Herzl said jestingly that the Chief Rabbi would be forced to collaborate with the Zionists. Güdemann replied: "Explain Zionism to me, I don't understand it".[24] According to his own version, Güdemann said in the course of their conversation:

> In the Talmud it is written: 'Vengeance is great', since the word 'vengeance' appears between two names of God, 'A God of Vengeance is God'. You do not seem to be aware of this at all. Am I to go away from here and clear the way for our enemies who constantly abuse and curse the name of Jew and all those who bear it, in order to grow vegetables in Palestine? No, ten thousand horses could not drag me away from here, until I have the satisfaction of seeing the downfall of our enemies'. These were the last words exchanged between Herzl and myself.

[22] *Ibid.,* I, p. 362.
[23] *Ibid.,* I, pp. 579-580.
[24] *Ibid.,* I, p. 601.

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Herzl reports on this last discussion that Güdemann "had some grotesque ideas". He would rather be killed in the Seitenstettengasse in front of the Temple than surrender to the antisemites: he "will not take flight" and all the other familiar catchwords. He also refferred to the "mission of Jewry", which could only rave a meaning and purpose if the Jews were scattered all over the world. "This mission", Herzl thought, "is an excuse of all those who are prosperous in their present domicile — but they are the only ones".[25]

Güdemann confessed that at that time, and also when writing his Memoirs, he could not understand why a Jew who had attended German schools and acquired a German education should regard himself as belonging to a Jewish nation and "uproot himself from his native soil". Benedikt of the *Neue Freie Presse* agreed with him in this, and they assured each other that they "thought and felt German".

Four weeks later (in April 1897) Güdemann countered with the booklet *Nationaljudentum* issued by the same publisher who had been responsible for the publication of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*. It was not until 1902, however, that Güdemann wrote a really anti-Zionist pamphlet, "The Historical Basis and Fundamental Features of Judaism".

Güdemann worked on his book *Nationaljudentum* in an angry mood. His last conversations with Herzl had no doubt increased Güdemann's desire to "kill" Zionism with his brochure. He elaborated upon the theory that although the Jews had once been a people, united by one country, language and religion, the Jewish conception of a people was somewhat different from that of other nations. The Jewish people were God's people that had an historic-religious mission to fulfil. According to Güdemann's reasoning, the Jewish religion was anti-national and Judaism was called upon to eliminate the individualism of the nations, while striving to unify all mankind in one family of nations. Nationhood would be tantamount to suicide for Jewry. Güdemann advocated assimilation and the brotherhood of men. The Jew in Germany should regard himself as a German. From no acknowledged Jewish authority had there ever been an appeal for national independence. Such independence could only mean a bloodless crusade for the Jews.

In his Memoirs Güdemann defended himself against Herzl's belief that he wrote his *Nationaljudentum* at the request of the Board of the Jewish Community. "It shows", he stressed, "how little he knew me and the Board. No member of the Board read the brochure before its publication and perhaps not even afterwards. Herzl thought he could seize them all by the scruff of the neck and has probably been under the impression that I also had been influenced by others".

Herzl wrote: "Dr Güdemann has published a malicious counter-bro-

[25] *Ibid.*, I, p. 601.

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chure entitled *Nationaljudentum,* obviously at the request of the local "upper" (sic) Jews.[26] The publisher, Max Breitenstein, told Herzl that "Rothschild ordered thirty copies immediately upon the appearance of Güdemann's book".[27]

In his Memoirs Güdemann complained about an article published in *Die Welt,* the weekly founded by Herzl, and expressed the opinion that Herzl had incited "his Paris Adlatus" against him. But it was more likely that the latter had carried out his "insidious attack *motu proprio*". Had not the author of the article delivered a lecture in Vienna in which he had "adopted the same outrageous attitude" in denouncing the opponents of Zionism and, in particular, the rabbis who believed in a "mission"?

This "Paris Adlatus" was Max Nordau. In his article, "A Dispute in the Temple", published in *Die Welt* on July 11, 1897, he said: "A people have no other mission than to live and to develop all their inherent abilities to the full. Thus will they fulfil their humanitarian and historic mission quite naturally and unconsciously. A Jewry oppressed, persecuted and despised in the midst of antisemitic nations is of no value to mankind; a free, strong and forward looking Jewish people will be able to make a useful contribution towards the progress of humanity as a whole". This was Nordau's reply to Güdemann.

Herzl's own reply was published in Joseph Bloch's *Oesterreichische Wochenschrift* on April 13, 1897, under the heading, "Dr. Güdemann's *Nationaljudentum*". He exposed a number of contradictions in *Nationaljudentum* and pointed out that for each of Güdemann's quotations from the Talmud against Zionism an equal number could be found in favour of Zionism. "We are one nation", wrote Herzl and continued: "A nation is an historic group with common traits and united by a common enemy". Herzl was not in favour of leaving the "theologists to fight it out", as they "are too learned ever to reach an agreement. One Chief Rabbi says yes, the other Chief Rabbi says no – not to mention the Rabbis who say yes as well as no". Herzl's article is not mentioned in Güdemann's Memoirs, but Güdemann did refer to Nordau's criticism, which hurt him deeply. He deplored that the "extremism displayed by some of his associates" caused Herzl much sorrow and contributed to his premature death. He concluded these remarks with the words: Honoured be his memory.

Güdemann denied that Zionism had halted the trend towards conversion. He admitted only one useful aspect of Zionism: the educated Jews who had removed Zion from their hearts, and the progressive Jewish communities who had deleted all references to Zion from their prayerbooks (as was also done in Vienna, in spite of his opposition) were now prepared again to include Zion in their prayers. It was thanks to the jour-

[26] *Ibid.*, I, p. 614.

[27] *Ibid.*, I, p. 615.

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nalist Herzl that the prayers for Zion were revived "like a bolt from the blue", although they had been regarded as "ideas which had long since died".

Thirty years after the deletion of the references to Zion from the prayer-books, at a time when "Zion was in fashion", Güdemann was asked by the Board of the Jewish Community whether he would object to the reintroduction of the prayers in question. Güdemann was only too happy to consent. He sums up his chapter, "My Attitude to Zionism", with the following observations: "What a blessing Zionism could have been, had it been content to let this idea pursue its normal course, instead of diverting it towards nationalism. But its protagonists wanted to be both Jews and free-thinkers, which is a *contradictio in adjecto*".

As a matter of fact, Güdemann's *Nationaljudentum* served as publicity for Herzl's cause. The controversy was widely discussed in the Jewish press and elsewhere. Herzl, the intellectual Jew, regretted that the religious Jew had forced him into this polemic, and in later years, one may assume, it grieved Güdemann that he had opposed him.

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